



CITY COUNCIL

Public Safety Committee

Monday, February 7, 2011
Council Office
5 p.m.

Committee Members Attending: D. Sterner, chair, M. Goodman-Hinnershitz

Others Attending: V. Spencer, L. Kelleher, J. Conrad, W. Heim, C. Geffken, T. McMahon, D. Kersley, F. Denbowski, C. Younger

FEMA & COOP

Mr. Conrad, the City's Emergency Management Coordinator, noted the need to follow up with the City's emergency action plan with a Continuity of Operations (COOP) plan that will allow the continuation of government services and provide the necessary planning regarding what service levels should continue.

Mr. Conrad stated that he recently attended a Webinar on the COOP, with the City Clerk's Office about the need to determine the City's essential records which sets the basis for the relocation of personnel for the continuation of government services. He stated that he spoke to Mr. Geffken about this need and was invited to begin discussions at this week's Department Director's meeting.

There was next discussion on the need to continue various government services such as payroll, finance, information, and public safety services, etc. There was also discussion on the need to preserve records by providing copies both electronically and off-site.

Ms. Kelleher noted that the COOP can cover extreme situations such as hurricanes but can also provide for the continuity of services when smaller events such as snow emergencies or last Wednesday's ice storm occur. Mr. Conrad agreed and noted that by having a COOP employees would be cross-trained and able to step in to take over various services when there is a disruption of personnel.

The Public Safety Committee requested an update in four (4) to six (6) months.

Mr. Conrad also invited City Council and others to attend an upcoming FEMA training, held at the County Communication Center.

Mr. Conrad explained that in an emergency situation the County would be contacted first, followed by Pennsylvania (PEMA) and then the Federal Government (FEMA).

Ms. Kelleher stressed the need for departments and offices to identify their essential records and have them in a portable container that can be moved if the building is vacated during the work day or retrieved by emergency service personnel during off hours.

The Public Safety Committee thanked Mr. Conrad for his work to assist the City in preparedness.

Services Center Implementation

Mr. Geffken stated that a portion of the Services Center closed during the winter storm last Wednesday and had no back up plan. He stated that the Treasury section handled payments but were not prepared to deal with walk-in issues and telephone calls. He noted the difficulty in handling the variety of walk-ins and phone calls with the current staff levels.

Mr. Geffken also described the problem dealing with hybrid complaint situations such as Code complaints. He stated that he is working to address this problem.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz noted the need to extend the information network to provide residents with after hour information.

Mr. McMahon suggested providing voicemail service with next return day calling and to have update information provided on the website as well. Mr. Spencer suggested exploring the approaches used by other comparable cities.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz suggested developing off hour and weekend coverage by rotating employees who can provide critical information to residents. She stated that if the City can't provide this service properly they should consider not providing it all.

Chief Heim expressed the belief that as the City has two (2) 24/7 Public Safety departments where citizens high level safety complaints can be handled affectively without having other staff on call. He suggested that information be posted on the City's website.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz expressed the belief that majority of calls end up in the Council office and suggested that Ms. Kelleher be involved in planning and training of Customer Service Center staff.

The Committee requested an update at the March meeting.

Quality of Life Ticketing – Field Testing

Mr. Geffken stated that the field testing period ended today. He stated that February 7th was the first day when tickets, rather than warnings, were issued. He expressed the belief that the warning period assisted staff in making necessary changes. He stated that the Administration is currently seeking Maintenance Aides.

Housing & Zoning Permits

Mr. Geffken stated that internal legal staff provided the necessary legal research to Attorney Welz who has been retained to assist with the Zoning process. He stated that Mr. Wells will be making a report on curing the backlog and developing sound Zoning policy at the February 28th Committee of the Whole meeting.

Public Safety at Schools

Mr. Spencer reported that so far two (2) meetings have occurred to discuss corridor safety and other school safety issues. He stated that the Reading School District is willing to assist with the purchase of additional security cameras after the Police Department identifies the corridors.

Chief Heim stated that the corridors will be monitored through the Police Departments current system. He stated that the School Resource officers and command staff will study and identify corridors where students can travel safely.

The next meeting with the Reading School District is planned after the route is identified.

Mr. Spencer reported that the meeting held last week focused on other safety issues such as double parking and crossing guards. He stated that the Reading School District is working with the various school buildings to develop a staging area or develop a viable traffic plan. He stated that the school district had questions concerning the City's administration of the crossing guards and the monitoring of the crossing guards.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz suggested working to connect the various initiatives and organizations that are studying youth violence to provide good coordination. She also noted the need to engage residents and businesses along the school corridor area.

2011 Budget Follow-up Topics

Bulletproof shields for Streetlights

Mr. Geffken stated that he had no update on the issue. Chief Heim stated that the Department through drug forfeiture money had purchased some shields to be used in high drug areas where streetlights were repeatedly shot out. He stated the shields are very expensive, but are cheaper than replacing the streetlights in areas where replacement is often necessary.

Mr. Washington arrived at this time.

Housing Registration and Inspection

Mr. Geffken stated that the fee covering the inspection period needs to be added to the existing ordinance.

Mr. Washington stated that school staff is preparing an analysis of issues and a plan to correct those issues.

Transiency Policy

Ms. Kelleher explained that this issue was identified during the 2011 budget discussion and Council members asked the Public Safety Committee to begin working on a policy to contain the transiency issue.

The Public Safety Committee adjourned at approximately 7:35 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Linda A. Kelleher CMC, City Clerk